

A Darkening Shadow

An Australian Defender of Intellectual Freedom Reflects on the Text and Significance of the London Declaration on Combating Anti-Semitism

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Background: On 20 May 2013 our national newspaper *The Australian* carried a news report headed 'Labor MPs to back PM on anti-Semitism'. It included the following information 'NSW Labor MPs will use this week's parliamentary sittings for a mass signing of the London Declaration on Combating Anti-Semitism. The Prime Minister became the first Australian leader to put her name to the document last month. Last week, Federal Coalition parliamentarians made history when all 71 House of Representatives and 34 Senate members of the Coalition party room signed the Declaration..... Parliamentarians who sign the Declaration pledge to "expose, challenge and isolate political actors who engage in hate against Jews and target the state of Israel as a Jewish collectivity" and "challenge any foreign leader, politician or public figure who denies, denigrates or trivialises the Holocaust."'

This report aroused my concern that the intellectual freedom and respectability of Holocaust revisionists and their supporters within Australia was now being threatened as never before; and accordingly I endeavoured to research the relevant declaration. This article is the result. It begins by analysing the document itself, and then proceeds to consider its significance for Australian and world politics.

I

It seems^[1] that the first annual conference of the Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Anti-Semitism was held in London in February 2009. It brought together over one hundred parliamentarians and other representatives from thirty-five different countries to discuss the increase in contemporary anti-Semitism around the world, by sharing knowledge, experience and recommendations. At the end of the conference, those attending called upon national governments, parliaments, international institutions, political and civic leaders, non-government organisations and civil society to affirm 'democratic and human values', build societies 'based on respect and citizenship' and combat any manifestations of 'anti-Semitism and discrimination'. The conference concluded with the signing of the London Declaration on Combating Anti-Semitism.

It needs to be at once noted that this declaration does not claim any kind of divine sanction. It is a statement originating purely from human sources and, as is well known, *humanum errare* – it is human to err, to make mistakes, to get things wrong. Sacred tradition, moreover, contains many warnings about the folly of human beings trying to organise the world and their communities without reference to the Will of God. For Jews and Christians, for example, the story of the Tower of Babel is a perpetual reminder.

It will be noted that three phrases from the participants' call are placed in quotation marks above. This is to indicate that they should not pass without challenge themselves. Plato, one of the greatest minds of the European tradition, was one authority who warned that democracy is not by any means the best form of political order and that it tends to be followed by authoritarian rule, even tyranny. As for 'human' values, we have to ask what these are. Humans appear to have always differed among themselves as to what matters are or are not of importance; and, as already noted, human attempts to

determine value without recourse to divine wisdom are not advocated by sacred tradition. Thus it is by no means clear that 'democratic and human values' are to be affirmed.

In British law a distinction can be drawn between the concepts of a 'subject' and a 'citizen'. Britons, for example, have traditionally seen themselves as subjects of the Crown; and, in past centuries, this status was seen as involving a two-way transaction, whereby the Crown received the loyalty of subjects but, in return, guaranteed to protect them and work for their welfare, this guarantee being expressed in terms of a sacred oath. By contrast, the concept of 'citizen' seems to derive, in modern times at least, from events such as the American and French revolutions, which, let it be noted, were anti-monarchical in nature. It seems that it can too easily happen that 'citizens' come to be seen as persons owing obedience to the State (an entity not easy to define or to identify in terms of reality and responsibility), as persons expected to obey the dictates of parliaments or other such bodies, whether or not these claim to be, or are, representative of the popular will. From that situation, it is but another short slide and people have become serfs beneath a tyranny. Thus it is not at all clear that 'citizenship' is wisely invoked as a criterion for determining what political action is to be chosen. As for the word 'respect', let us just say at this stage that it is vague.

The last phrase is a piece of dialectical dynamite. What do these two words mean – 'anti-Semitism' and 'discrimination'? No one of any decency and good sense wishes to advocate unjust or unfair treatment of Jews, either singly or in groups, or as the nation of Israel, or as a people as a whole. On the other hand, no one with those attributes is going to suggest that Jews in any contexts whatever should be held to be above and beyond adverse criticism and even adverse action, where this is justified.

It all comes down to 'discrimination' indeed – that is, if we are using the older meaning of the word: making a distinction between, noting the difference between, two or more objects of discussion. Unfortunately, there is reason to believe that the conference attendees were using the word 'discrimination' differently – to mean hostile and unfair treatment in comparison to other persons, groups, nations or peoples. The danger of using the word in this way (the same is true of the word 'prejudice') is that it tends to beg questions, so that unscrupulous persons can use the ensuing confusion, by means of intellectual sleight of hand, to achieve private agenda that may not be in the interests of others.

There is an old saying that one should beware of buying a pig in a poke. A poke was a bag which, of course, disguised the quality of pig involved or, even, perhaps, the fact that there was no pig at all but something else. We are entitled already to wonder whether the London Declaration on Combating Anti-Semitism has itself got something of the qualities of a poke!

The Declaration apparently deals with 'six fundamental issues'.^[2] The first of these is identified as 'Challenging Anti-Semitism.' Parliamentarians are urged to oppose those 'who engage in hate against Jews'. Here at once we encounter a serious matter for concern. In recent decades Jewish persons and groups have been very ready to condemn as 'hatred' towards themselves and their people all sorts of behaviours and actions, many of which reasonable observers may well conclude exhibit acceptable natures and do not really show hatred at all. There is a fatal and dangerous vagueness in that phrase 'hate against Jews'. Strong opposition to a Jew or to certain Jewish policies or activities does not in itself indicate hatred; but this distinction is often fudged in the contemporary world of political action and commentary.

Parliamentarians are also urged to oppose those who ‘target the State of Israel as a Jewish collectivity.’ Well, it *is* a Jewish collectivity. The fact that it may have a minority of non-Jewish citizens does not alter that fact. Israel is a Jewish nation. It thus appears that the Declaration is opposed to adverse criticism and action against Israel of any kind.

Next governments are *instructed* that they ‘must’ oppose those who ‘deny, denigrate or trivialise the Holocaust’. This appears to be a clear and serious attack on intellectual freedom. The nature of Nazi treatment and mistreatment of Jews during the period 1933-1945 ought to be open to free public discussion just like any other great and serious topic, such as whether or not Jesus was divine or whether or not a particular sacred scripture is or is not ‘the Word of God’. At the present time there is a school of writers who are fairly to be described as ‘revisionist historians’ or ‘Holocaust revisionists’. The nature of their theses can currently be quickly studied on the website of Inconvenient History, and it will be noted by any fair-minded observer that their writings have intellectual substance and ethical integrity, so that they cannot validly be dismissed with ridicule and without proper, reasoned examination.. The problem with the Declaration is that it overlooks the fact that opponents of these historians habitually mis-name them ‘Holocaust deniers’ – as though they were denying the existence of any Nazi wrongdoing to Jews of any kind, rejecting, as it were, ‘the whole box and dice.’ Such is in fact a gross slander of Holocaust revisionists. There is reason to fear that the terms ‘denigrate’ and ‘trivialise’ can also be misused in the same way to unfairly attack and dismiss these researchers.

The Declaration further states that governments ‘must’ encourage civil society ‘to be vigilant to’ dissident writing on the Holocaust and ‘to openly condemn it’. One wonders what authority the promoters of the Declaration imagine themselves to possess that could justify this call for active intervention against a school of writers on a particular historical controversy. The wording of the Declaration suggests that these promoters *see themselves as possessing superior authority to governments!* the Declaration also takes it upon itself to tell the United Nations Organisation what it should do.

The second fundamental issue addressed by the Declaration is headed ‘Prohibitions’. Here governments are instructed that they must abide by the Genocide Convention (a man-made statute, not a divine ordinance) and oppose ‘incitement to genocide’. Here again there is a dangerous and fatal vagueness. Observation shows that the accusation of ‘genocide’ is often raised in contexts where, while there may have been ethically unacceptable behaviour, it did not amount to genocide (the destruction of an entire people) either in fact or in intention.

The Declaration also, at this point, calls on parliamentarians to enact ‘effective Hate Crime legislation’ and to ‘empower law enforcement agencies to convict’. Judging by the way the word ‘hatred’ is misused by certain persons and groups to further their own political aims, this part of the Declaration can be decoded to mean that an intellectually repressive regime is to be put in place such as reminds one of the Inquisition, the Gestapo and the NKVD, to mention merely three well-known examples from history. The publication of certain theses, seen to be damaging to particular interest groups (or one such group), is to be banned, thus making resistance to their plans much harder.

The third fundamental issue canvassed by the Declaration is headed ‘Identifying the threat’. Parliamentarians are encouraged to agitate for the establishment of ‘inquiry scrutiny panels’, an ominous phrase that again brings to mind the past use by other powers of various inquisitorial investigation tribunals. Moreover, the law of the land is to be manipulated to serve the interests of

those intent on proscribing 'anti-Semitism': 'training material' is to be prepared 'for use by Criminal Justice Agencies'. One wonders why centuries of legal tradition in the major European countries is not seen as already more than capable of righting serious injustices.

Tyrannies, whether incipient or actual, inevitably need to turn education systems into centres for indoctrination of whatever ideology they promote. The fourth fundamental issue discussed in the Declaration is titled 'Education, awareness and training'. Police, prosecutors and judges are to be 'trained' so that 'perpetrators of anti-Semitic hate crime are to be successfully apprehended.' This looks like a further exhortation to engage in unethical tampering with the justice system.

As regards schools, governments are expected to 'develop teaching materials on the subjects of the Holocaust, racism, anti-Semitism and discrimination' which are to be 'incorporated into the national school curriculum.' This has all the hallmarks of a proposal to introduce a national brainwashing scheme. Why is this? Because it is a commonplace that an intense campaign has been in place for over forty years to silence dissident critics of the currently promoted account of the Holocaust. The major organs of the mass media appear to be signed up already for this campaign; and some fourteen or so nations have enacted laws proscribing Holocaust revisionism. A number of Holocaust revisionists have been imprisoned or fined. Some have lost their employment. In general they are regularly defamed in the mass media and not allowed adequate space in which to respond to attacks. Thus it is reasonable to assume that the subject called 'The Holocaust' will not be presented in an academic and open-ended manner.

It is interesting that the word 'racism' appears here. One is entitled to wonder whether this word has not been introduced since World War Two and then widely and powerfully employed in order to destroy peoples, to erode their ethnic solidarity and thus to make them easier to be controlled and dominated by the tyranny that so clearly now seems to be raising its head.

Everyone knows that tyrannies have to establish among their subject populations networks of spies and informers in order to keep control. The case, after World War Two, of East Germany is a particularly well-known example. Under a fifth heading of 'Community Support', the Declaration explains that the 'Criminal Justice System' (there is an ambiguity in that phrase which perhaps accurately indicates the kind of system the Declaration wishes to see put in place) is to communicate with 'local communities' in order to build up their 'confidence in reporting and pursuing convictions'. Those who have read George Orwell's *1984* will recall the elaborate system of informers instituted by 'Big Brother' or those acting in his name. Such a regime leads to widespread fear in the community as well, sometimes, as false accusations.

At the present time the development of the Internet has given Holocaust revisionists, as well as thousands of other lateral thinkers, prophets, would-be prophets and eccentrics, an opportunity to put their views to the public at large without restraint and censorship. The Declaration, in its discussion of its sixth fundamental issue, addresses this (from its point of view) undesirable and damaging situation, and calls on governments 'to create common metrics to measure anti-Semitism and other manifestations of hate online' and to find ways to tackle the relevant 'problems'.

In Australia the news of huge numbers of our federal and state parliamentarians signing the Declaration is a most ominous development. Particularly worrying is the fact that the Liberal-National Parties Coalition, currently in opposition in our national Parliament but expected to be voted into power at the elections on 14th September, has endorsed the Declaration with not a single one of its members in the federal parliament declining to do so.

Hitherto the Coalition has been a stronger defender of free speech than the more doctrinaire Labor Party. It has promised to repeal part, but not all, of the Racial Discrimination Act after it comes to power in order to diminish restrictions on public discussion of racial and ethnic issues. This latest development suggests that it will not, however, repeal current provisions against 'racial hatred' and that it will not defend free speech for dissident commentators on the Holocaust. It is reasonable to feel concern that it may even actively work to suppress their views, in accordance with the United Nations Organisation resolution of 1st November 2005.[\[3\]](#)

To the best of my knowledge our major media are allowing very little criticism of the Declaration to be published; and it may be that its full text has not been offered yet to the general view. The origins of the Declaration also appear to be a secret. One person (a university professor) who might have been expected to know the details has advised me that 'perhaps' the Declaration was originated by influential British Jews, although behind it may have been an Israeli opinion control operation.



Australian Federal Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus charged the Coalition with insincerity.
By *w:en>User:Adam Carr* [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>), CC-BY-SA-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>) or GFDL (www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html)], via Wikimedia Commons

On 20th May I sent the following letter to *The Australian*: 'Is all this signing of the London Agreement ('Labor MPs to back PM on anti-Semitism', 20/5) really in the interests of truth and human welfare? If

only it could be construed simply as a defence of a people downtrodden and persecuted! Unfortunately, it has all the hallmarks of a kowtow to imperial (and imperious) power, in this case power wielded through enormous financial clout.'

"One's suspicions are confirmed when one reads that signatories pledge themselves to challenge any person of importance who "denies, denigrates or trivialises the Holocaust." Assuming that "denies" includes "revises", as is usual in discussions in public forums today, this signifies an overt trampling on the principle of free speech. What has happened to our Parliament?"

Unfortunately this was not published and an appeal to the letters page editor for reconsideration was turned down.

On 24th May 2013 *The Australian*, in a report headed 'Libs back bid to beat anti-Semitism', quoted Vic Alhadeff, chief executive of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, as approving the signings of the London Declaration and saying that such action 'sends a strong message, a benchmark, as to what we as a society will accept and what we will not.' This suggests that its promoters definitely envision it as a means of social and political censorship of views they wish to repress and blot out from the awareness of mankind.

Then on 28th May *The Australian* reported under the heading 'Coalition targeted on race' that the federal Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus had charged the Coalition with insincerity. Dreyfus, who happens to be Jewish, argued that signing the London Declaration and planning to change the Racial Discrimination Act were incompatible actions. *The Australian* noted that the Coalition legal affairs spokesman George Brandis had firmly rejected the claim and stated that there was no inconsistency, because 'nothing in the London Declaration acts as a constraint on intellectual freedom.' I sent a letter to the paper on 28th May pointing out that the senator was wrong about the Declaration and why, but it was not published.

The signings of the Declaration were linked in *The Australian* in various reports, opinion pieces and letters during May to a separate controversy about the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign against Israel. Writers disputed whether or not that campaign is or is not anti-Semitic and whether or not it is a wise or effective way of defending and aiding Palestinians and especially the inhabitants of Gaza.

People wonder how on earth great tyrannies, so obviously against the interests of the vast majority of the peoples affected, were allowed to come into being in past times. One explanation is summed up in the old phrase: 'Give a dog a bad name and then hang him!' The 2005 UNO resolution and the 2009 declaration appear clearly to be bent upon 'giving a bad name' to Holocaust revisionists, whose researches threaten what appears to be the rise to power of a malign elite.

Continuing silence within our nations on this grave matter – both the challenge the Declaration makes and the challenge to it, which I have now penned – will be a strong indicator that an Orwellian political catastrophe may be just around the corner.

Notes:

Melbourne, 5th June 2013

[1] Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Declaration_on_Combating_Antisemitism Consulted 24th May 2013.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Robert Faurisson, doyen of revisionists, reported on 17th November 2005 that this resolution was adopted by the 191 nations comprising the UN General Assembly unanimously and without a vote. Drafted by Israel, it proclaimed 27th January as 'International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust' and 'rejects any denial of the Holocaust as an historical event, either in full or part.' Faurisson commented:

'The UN act assumes only a political and not a juridical character. Still, since it provides that the Secretary General will have to report on the measures subsequently taken within the framework of the resolution, the revisionists will have reason to fear consequences for themselves of a judicial or administrative nature..... The resolution will serve morally to justify and facilitate extradition measures taken against revisionists.'

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